THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) A number of steps have been taken to promote exports which include reduction in transaction cost through decentralisation and simplification of procedures and some sector specific measures such as extension of zero duty EPCG scheme to textile sector and certain sub sectors of chemicals, exemption from additional customs duty under zero duty EPCG scheme for marine and software sector, rationalisation of EOU/EPZ scheme and various other measures as enumerated in the Exim Policy. Steps have also been taken to promote exports through multilateral and bilateral initiatives, identification of thrust sectors and focus regions. Most of the steps have already become effective.

Privatisation of Tea Gardens

28. SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government plan to revive all the five tea gardens of ailing public sector unit Tea Trading Corporation of India;

(b) whether Government have any plan to privatise these tea gardens; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) to (c) Tea Trading Corporation of India (TTCI), a wholly owned subsidiary of STC, is facing an acute financial crunch being a lose making company and has been unable to discharge its obligation. The total liability of the Company is estimated around Rs. 36 crores as on 31.1.1997.

TTCI management has filed a petition in the Calcutta High Court for liquidation of the company. The case is now pending in the Court.

Patenting of Vegetables

29. SHRI K.R. MALKANI: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that "Karela", "Jamun and Brinjal" have been patented in USA (vide the Times of India dt. 15.7.99);